

4.14 Mineral Resources

For the purpose of CEQA analysis, “mineral resources” refers to aggregate resources. Aggregate consists of sand, gravel, and crushed rock.

4.14.1 Existing Conditions

Many valuable minerals are found in the San Diego region, ranging from gold to crushed rock. Production of metals and gemstones and other more glamorous minerals has been limited for many years because of high extraction costs. In terms of both quantity and economic value, sand and gravel and crushed rock are the most valuable mineral resources extracted and processed in the San Diego region.

4.14.1.1 *Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA)*

SMARA (1975) mandated that aggregate resources throughout the state be mapped so that local governments could make land use decisions in light of the presence of aggregate resources and the need to preserve access to those resources. One of the primary objectives of SMARA is to protect mineral resources of regional and statewide significance. The California Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology is the state agency responsible for identifying and protecting Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs) per SMARA. The Division of Mines and Geology has prepared Mineral Land Classification Maps for aggregate resources. The Mineral Land Classification Maps designate four different types of resource sensitivities. The four sensitivity types are:

MRZ-1: Areas where adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that little likelihood exists for their presence.

MRZ-2: Areas where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present or where it is judged that a high likelihood for their presence exists.

MRZ-3: Areas containing mineral deposits the significance of which cannot be evaluated from available data.

MRZ-4: Areas where available information is inadequate for assignment of any other MRZ zone.

4.14.1.2 *Sand and Gravel Extraction*

Within and adjacent to the Project Area, two MRZ-2 boundaries have been mapped by the California Division of Mines and Geology. Figure 4.14-1 depicts the MRZ-2 locations within and adjacent to Subareas A, B, and C. The first MRZ-2 area encompasses portions of Subareas A and C. This area is currently not being used for aggregate extraction. The land use types in this area consist of public services, commercial, industrial, residential, and open space.

The second MRZ-2 area encompasses portions of Subareas A and B and contains a 250-acre sand and gravel-processing facility. The facility operates on both sides of the San Diego River along the northern boundary of the Project Area, generally between Princess View Drive and Margerum Avenue (Figure 4.14-1). The Project Area encompasses approximately 200 acres of the total 250-acre sand and gravel-processing center. The quarry has been in operation since 1927 and is currently operating under a

Conditional Use Permit (CUP). The CUP expires in 2033 and regulates the mining, processing, storage, and sale of natural resource materials. The California Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology also regulates the sand and gravel processing facility. A master reclamation plan for the 250 acres covered within the CUP establishes goals and general guidelines for the reclamation of the project area upon completion of the mining activity. Final reclamation is to be accomplished in phases with the approval of precise reclamation plans (City of San Diego, Navajo Community Plan, 1982).

The remaining portions of the Project Area not within the MRZ-2 boundaries are within the MRZ-3 boundary (see Figure 4.14-1). The MRZ-3 boundary is defined as “Areas containing mineral deposits the significance of which cannot be evaluated from available data.”

A. City of San Diego

The City of San Diego Progress Guide and General Plan establishes goals and standards to address future planning decisions related to the extraction and processing of mineral resources. Goals applicable to the existing sand and gravel operations in the Project Area include:

- Protection of major mineral deposits against encroachment by land uses that would make their extraction undesirable or impossible.
- Production of sand and gravel with minimal harm and disturbance to adjacent properties.
- Planned rehabilitation of depleted mineral areas to facilitate desirable reuses compatible with local development objectives.
- Conservation of construction material resources to provide for City's growth and development needs now and in the near and distant future.

B. Navajo Community Plan

The Industrial Element of the Navajo Community Plan addresses objectives and proposals to guide and encourage future policy and development decisions related to the sand and gravel facility located within the Project Area. The following proposal was established to encourage industrial development that is compatible with the residential character of the Navajo community:

Future development of the remaining sand and gravel operation and the previously mined 170 acres should be accomplished under a master planned industrial development (PID) permit process. A master PID will provide an opportunity for comprehensive review of the relationship between proposed development and the ultimate reclamation plan for the San Diego River, coordination of open space and pathways with Mission Trails Regional Park, traffic impacts to Mission Gorge Road and the proposed State Highway 52 interchanges.

C. Tierrasanta Community Plan

The northern half of the existing sand and gravel processing facility, within Subarea B is located in the community of Tierrasanta. The Community Plan contains a discussion of the sand and gravel operation and some goals, objectives and proposals applicable to the sand and gravel operation. In the discussion

section, the Community Plan identifies the existing sand and gravel area as a major mineral resource in the San Diego area. In addition, the Plan states that “While the extraction of these minerals is of economic value, certain characteristics that accompany mineral extraction are often found objectionable. These include noise, dust, and the unattractive appearance of the quarry sites.” The goal of the Open Space section is to “Establish an open space system which protects the natural resources, provides for the managed production of resources...” An objective contained in the Community Plan that is applicable to the sand and gravel operation the Community Plan states, “minimize the effect of natural resource extraction on surrounding land uses.” Also, related to the sand and gravel operation, the Community Plan states: “Upon termination of the sand and gravel operations, the excavated areas should be rehabilitated and a pathway to Mission Trails park provided. Any other use of the property beyond open space uses will require an amendment to this plan.”

D. San Diego River Park Master Plan

In general, the San Diego River Park Master Plan seeks to provide a direction to restore the relationship between the San Diego River and nearby land uses. Relative to the existing sand and gravel extraction operation located within Subarea B of the Project Area, the Plan identifies several key points; 1) ongoing discussions with Superior Mine land owners and developers is essential to finding an appropriate balance between development and open space; 2) potential for the site to redevelop for more intensive use makes time critical to taking action at the planning level. While mining operations are scheduled to continue for another 20 years, potential redevelopment value may reduce this time frame; 3) minimum 500 feet Open Space Corridor is recommended in addition to trail corridor/buffer; and 4) acquisition of 15-20 acre site is recommended for development as a naturalized park with access to the river from Mission Gorge Road.

4.14.2 Impact Threshold

For the purposes of this EIR, a significant impact would occur if the proposed project would:

- *Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state; or,*
- *Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan.*

4.14.3 Impact

As described in the Environmental Setting, two MRZ-2 boundaries have been mapped by the California Division of Mines and Geology within and adjacent to the Project Area.

The first MRZ-2 area encompasses portions of Subareas A and C; however, this area is not currently used for aggregate extraction and future use of this area for aggregate extraction is unlikely as the area is currently developed with urban uses and is surrounded by uses that constrain the future use of this area due to potential land use compatibility issues. The land use types that currently exist within this portion of the Project Area and the MRZ-2 are public service, commercial, industrial, residential, and open space. Redevelopment of this area consistent with Community Plan land use designations will not result in a loss of availability of known mineral resources that would be considered valuable to the region and residents of

the state, or loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site as the resources are not currently being mined and the area is currently developed with various land use types.

The second area designated MRZ-2 is an operational 250-acre sand and gravel-processing facility located within Subarea B of the Project Area (see Figure 4.14-1). The Project Area encompasses approximately 200 acres of the total 250-acre sand and gravel-processing center. Future redevelopment of this area consistent with the Community Plan land use designations will reduce the total land area of the sand and gravel extraction area by approximately 92 acres (50%). Because the sand and gravel extraction area (200 acres within the Project Area) is currently operating under a CUP that does not expire until 2033, it is assumed that the sand and gravel extraction facility will continue to operate under its CUP and through oversight by the California Division of Mines and Geology until completion of mining activity, which would occur either through exhaustion of the resource or at the time of marginal economic return. Sand and gravel operations may also cease due to an accelerated transition created by redevelopment opportunities. Cessation of mining activity is the prerogative of the mining operator and the California Division of Mines and Geology cannot mandate ongoing mining activity at a particular location. At the time in the future when sand and gravel operations are discontinued, as stated above, a master reclamation plan, final reclamation plan, and precise reclamation plans for the mining area will be developed. Future reuse of the sand and gravel area will be consistent with the Navajo and Tierrasanta Community Plan goals, objectives, and proposals.

No significant impact will occur relative to loss of available known mineral resources that would be considered valuable to the region and residents of the state. Redevelopment of this area is consistent with the Navajo and Tierrasanta Community Plans and will not result in a loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on the local general plan.

4.14.4 Significance Of Impact

No significant impact will occur relative to loss of available known mineral resources that would be considered valuable to the region and residents of the state. Redevelopment of this area is consistent with the Navajo and Tierrasanta Community Plans and will not result in a loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on the local general plan.

4.14.5 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measure is proposed as no significant mineral resources impact has been identified.

4.14.6 Conclusion

No significant mineral resources impact has been identified.

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